

25X1A

[REDACTED] DEBRIEFING

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Topic

Knowledge of the USAF Flyer  
Philip Smith

Summary

Some details of Smith's shoot down - treatment  
in Canton - interrogation demands - behavior in  
prison - present health and adjustment to prison

Date of Debrief

19 January 1972

Debriefers

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[REDACTED] OMS/PSS

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DPMO review(s) completed.

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DEBRIEFING REPORT

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NAME : [REDACTED]

DATE OF DEBRIEF : 19 January 1972

NAME OF DEBRIEFER: [REDACTED]

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SUBJECT : Knowledge of the USAF Flyer Philip  
Smith

SUMMARY : Some details of Smith's shoot down-  
treatment in Canton - interrogation  
demands - behavior in prison - present  
health and adjustment to prison

It was around January 1966 that [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
both knew there was someone in a cell further down toward  
the end of the cell block. They could tell this by the  
fact that the cell light could be seen through the transom  
at night, they could hear meals being brought and they knew  
somebody else was being taken to the toilet and to the  
exercise courtyard. Meanwhile [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and his  
Chinese cell mate were meeting mornings for two hours for  
their so called "study" sessions.

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However, there was at this time a break in the "study"  
sessions and [REDACTED] taking advantage of this break, watched  
for the new prisoner through his window (adjusted unseen)  
and finally spotted him as he was taken to the exercise yard.

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He reported to [REDACTED] that it was a Caucasian in a padded  
quilt, blud-dyed Chinese army uniform and he appeared to be  
an American.

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Because the new prisoner was at the opposite end of the cell block from the door which led to the exercise courtyard there was no way for [ ] or [ ] to pass this prisoner's door. They thought it important, however, to let him know there were Americans in the prison and did so by leaving such things as an empty crumpled pack of American cigarettes in the toilet waste basket or a gum wrapper in the exercise yard. Smith later acknowledged that he had seen these signs and that his morale was greatly lifted by it.

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One month went by and they were still unable to communicate with Smith. Then in February 1966, [ ] and [ ] were due to take what was at that time a periodic physical examination which always took place at the Bureau of National Security Hospital in Peking. When the prison interpreter told the two to prepare for this (such physicals were always given in the evening and involved a fifty minute jeep ride through the city streets of Peking), he said that "another person" would be in the jeep this time and that the two were forbidden to speak to him. One hour later when [ ] and [ ] boarded the jeep they found Smith seated inside. Then a few days later the interpreter came into the study period announcing that a new prisoner would be brought.

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in to join them. The interpreter said that he was belligerent and aggressive and he wanted to make sure that there would be no fights among the prisoners.

25X1A [ ] is still not quite certain why the interpreter seemed so concerned that there would be trouble of this kind.

Two days following that statement by the interpreter, Smith was brought in. The Chinese cell mate of [ ] was no more eager about the study sessions than his fellow students and, therefore, there was no problem in cutting the study sessions short for quite a period of time while they got caught up with gossip and conversation with the new prisoner.

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Upon being brought in, Smith talked almost non-stop for several weeks. The first hour or so of the two hour sessions each day was spent with talk, questioning, and gossip and they would crowd the required "study" into the last few minutes of the morning. [ ] thinks that Smith might possibly have been 20 lbs. off his normal weight. He looked thin and weighed possibly in the neighborhood of 140 lbs. However, in all other respects he was in good health. Smith was, of course, tense and nervous but very pleased to see the Americans and obviously had been quite lonely in his cell.

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The following information was gotten by [ ] with respect to Smith's earlier captivity:

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25X1A Smith told [ ] that he had been flying a fighter plane (F-100?) and had gotten separated from his group during a period of very bad visibility. He mentioned the name of a navigational device which [ ] does not remember (it meant nothing to him) which Smith said had broken down, and as a result of this failure he became lost. Smith said that he had lost his ability to accurately determine directions. He radioed for a fix and received a voice acknowledging his call which he claimed kept telling him to stay on his heading, but with time the voice faded out of range and was gone.

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He finally saw land. He got his map and put it across his lap and was looking at it. He thought that he was going south along the coast of Vietnam. Infact, as he realized later, he was going north along the coast of Hainan. He was concentrating on the map on his lap when he was hit from behind by an enemy fighter plane.

25X1A He bailed out, landed in the water and was in the raft a relatively short time. He was then picked up by a boat which contained military personnel. These personnel took him to a small town (the name of which [ ] does not know) on the island of Hainan and then by

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auto to a boat. He took the boat across to the mainland and then went by railroad to Canton.

At Canton he was kept on some kind of a military base in a house with a number of military people guarding him.

He said that from the beginning to the end of his detention in Canton he was treated fairly well. He said that he was allowed to play checkers with the guards, there was Chinese radio music playing part of the time and that the food was somewhat better than that which he was experiencing in the prison with [REDACTED]

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The authorities in Canton told Smith that if he insisted, as he was doing, on sticking to name, rank and serial number that he would be held totally incommunicado and no one would ever know whether or not he was alive. They told him that if he would confess to the fact that he was on an espionage reconnaissance mission over the island of Hainan, he would be treated very leniently. They stated that he would then later go on trial.

[REDACTED] says that Smith, at the time he was with him, continued to argue loudly and vehemently that he was not on an espionage mission over the island of Hainan and was not to be accused of it. Smith was always totally upset that the Chinese would refuse to believe him.

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25X1A [ ] and [ ] told Smith to "take it easy" because the Chinese were bound to accuse him in this fashion but the experience made Smith excessively angry. [ ] is quite certain that while he was at Canton, Smith never agreed to confess to the espionage accusation and he certainly was not about to do so while he was in Peking.

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25X1A The only clue that [ ] has with respect to what Smith might have told his captors was the fact that Smith said "what I told them means nothing". Smith never did

25X1A tell [ ] what he did say, but [ ] inferred that he may have told slightly more than his name, rank and serial number, but not much beyond that. [ ] feels

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25X1A there is an indication that Smith gave perhaps just enough relatively harmless information to get writing privileges. [ ] thinks it quite possible that anyone who gives interrogators only name, rank and serial number is held incommunicado until he does otherwise.

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From Canton Smith was allowed to write a letter to his wife and he did receive at least one letter from his wife announcing the birth of his last baby. Whether or not there was any other correspondence from Canton, [ ] does not know.

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At the end of the approximately 90 days that [ ] thinks Smith was in Canton, they told Smith he was going

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to Peking for trial, and they transferred him by railroad to Peking and put him directly in the cell block in which [ ] was currently being held. [ ] thinks that one of the reasons that Smith continued to display a strong anger towards his captors was the fact that he was incensed that they would send him to Peking to stand trial on a charge which he was sure they knew was patently false.

Smith, during the first year or two of his captivity in particular, maintained a very high level of anger and belligerency against the Chinese. He particularly hated the interpreter who dealt with him and got into many very violent shouting matches. Some of these even resulted in scuffling in the cell and several times Smith was handcuffed and shut off from outdoor exercise for periods of time as punishment for same.

Smith was at first considerably suspicious of both [ ] and [ ] and constantly questioned who and what they were. Smith was given pretty much the complete true story by [ ] After some weeks [ ] and Smith set up a dead-drop communication system. From that point on Smith seemed to trust [ ] and then, in time, [ ] as well.

Although he trusted [ ] he absolutely refused to participate in any way in the "study" sessions. He stayed

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with the group through one of the study periods, (a six week long session in which they were studying one particular "topic" or book). [ ] thinks at this time that they were studying current events, the war in Vietnam in particular. Smith was totally convinced that if he even so much as read a sentence he was in severe danger of being brainwashed. He felt that although pretending to study might be innocuous enough, he thought it best to have nothing whatsoever to do with it. He said these were "brainwashing" sessions and that this Communist propaganda was bound to very badly influence a person. He said it was obvious the commies lied and that was an end to it. [ ] thinks that Smith was never certain as to the extent to which both [ ] and [ ] may have been influenced by this material.

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Even prolonged explanations by [ ] and [ ] to Smith indicating that the perfunctory reading of this material had a number of advantages would not convince him. [ ] and [ ] both pointed out that without these sessions there would be no chance to get together and there would be no opportunity to learn anything about international current events. They also pointed out that so long as they were participating there were small benefits. For example, relatively free access to

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reading material of a variety of kinds (including that sent from home) was possible. They said the prison authorities took a much more casual stance if a prisoner went through the "re-education" motions. This did not convince Smith in the slightest. At the end of this six week session the interpreter knew that Smith absolutely refused to participate or even to read any of the material. When, after about a month's break, the next "study" period began he appeared again. He stayed two weeks but still refused to participate and engaged only in gossip. When that ran out there was no participation on his part. The prison authorities told him to take part or else. He refused point blank and was then taken out of the study group. The result of his intransigence was that Smith was deprived of almost all outside reading material. He did continue to get his mail and packages and that's all. The prison guards shook down his cell and removed everything except necessities (they were careful to take away anything with which Smith could preoccupy his mind such as games, playing cards, puzzles, paint set, etc.). He was also deprived of outside exercise periods for about five weeks.  does not know of any other punishment which Smith given for refusal to participate.

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25X1A [ ] mentions that during his early years in  
25X1A prison both he and [ ] were hyper-alert, listening  
to all sounds and casing the prison, the guards and  
the prison routine. They were hyper-suspicious about  
microphones, torture and esoteric interrogation techniques.  
25X1A Smith, [ ] states, was showing the same kind of  
concern. He investigated every nook and cranny in the  
cells, was constantly on the lookout for hidden  
microphones. He was suspicious of his food, very often  
thinking there were drugs in it because of some strange  
taste. He was somewhat expectant of possible torture.  
25X1A All-in-all [ ] thinks that his behavior and  
personality were not too bad. However, he was at first  
overly belligerent with the authorities, particularly  
his interrogator. However, over the last year or so  
25X1A and by the time [ ] had left he had calmed down  
considerably. There seemed to be fewer violent encounters  
between him and his interpreter. In addition (on the  
25X1A advice of [ ] he had started a regular exercise routine,  
was keeping his cell very clean (as evidenced by the  
indications of his mopping it a good many times) and  
25X1A insofar as [ ] can tell, had adjusted relatively well.  
25X1A [ ] says that there's no question but that Smith  
is a dedicated career officer. He wants very much to

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stay in the Air Force and made that desire very clear to

25X1A [ ] , [ ] and anyone else in hearing distance. He

never, at any time, showed any bitterness toward the Air

25X1A For-e or the airplane itself or the equipment. In Smith's

very strong opinion, the U. S. Air Force is the best of

all possible worlds.

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